

## **Atlantic City Day**

### **LOST**

***By: Marshall***

**Lost is when you can't find your way out. That's not the only way you can get lost, you can get lost mentally. Once that happens life will get harder for you as it goes on.**

**When you get lost mentally, then you need help. You need help because you'll never be able to do anything by yourself. So sometimes you just have to say, "I need to slow my life down because this isn't the right way." Sometimes you just need to ask someone for help.**

**A time in my life when I was lost was when I had just come home from detention. I didn't have anything so I started hustling and getting money. That's when I became lost and started playing with guns. I became so caught up in this lifestyle. I was lost and did not know which way to go. I ended up getting locked up.**

**I'm back now and I am doing well, but being lost was not a good feeling. Being lost can cause stress and pain and nobody wants to feel like that. The best thing about picking yourself up and putting your life back together is that you learn from mistakes and do better.**

## **Atlantic City Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Denaë*

**My sister Talisa and I have a special bond. I think she is the most wonderful person that I have ever met so far. She had made her mistakes and realized it. She had a hard time getting through it. She made it all on her own, without anyone's help. I admire her.**

**When I was little, I didn't really have a mother figure because she wasn't around. My older sister had raised me. She made me clean up the house, go to school, and helped me through my tough situations. At the same time she was trying to keep up with her own problems, and her schoolwork. We often got mad at each other but at the end of the day we both knew we would always be there for each other. All the things that we did and everything she taught me helped me make better decisions. The best advice she gave me was, "Look at life not just in your eyes but everyone that is involved in your life."**

**The day she moved out, I knew it was going to be awhile until I would see her again. I felt lost and confused. At the time, I didn't know why she was leaving. I thought it was something I did. I was so upset. I felt that I was losing my mom all over again. When she left, I felt alone, I shut everyone out. The only person who would give me their time of day to talk and listen to what I had to say, was gone.**

**Several months later, she told me that she was moving close by. I felt a hole being fixed in my heart. Now we are the best of friends; my older sister, and my mom. I was lost, now I am found.**

## **Atlantic City Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Preston*

**When I was unemployed, I felt limited, constricted, stuck and lost because I wanted things I could not afford. Having no money is an everyday thing and it grows on you until you can't bear to ask your parents for more money. It happens everyday! Some people can stand to ask their parents for money without feeling bad, but not me.**

**Often I ask my dad for money or to just buy me whatever I need, but with no success. I understand he can't get me everything I want but its still frustrating. Since I am a kid I depend on my parents for things I need, such as clothes and shoes. Up until this year that's how things were.**

**Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day...Throughout the years as badly as I wanted, I couldn't exchange gifts. Even though I was thrilled to receive one, I felt selfish to not have one to give back. I felt I was wrong for not having a gift to give and I could imagine what they thought even though they didn't know my situation.**

**Now I have a job! It might not seem like much but one hundred dollars a week seemed like a dream come true. It's not like I don't need my dad anymore. It's just that I can buy myself things when I need it and give gifts. So things are a lot better. I'm about to open up a bank account and I'm currently looking for a new job for the summer. So now that I have a source of income, I no longer feel "lost." I have a sense of responsibility and appreciation for things I am able to buy for myself and others and I feel like I have a sense of direction. I am no longer "lost."**

## **Camden Prep**

### **LOST**

***By: Rakin***

**My idea of lost is about the certain type of people in our world. For example, there are a lot of smart and talented people who do not get the recognition they deserve because they don't know how to go about getting it. There are a lot of great athletes lost in the streets selling drugs because they weren't able to pay for college. Some people who are smart grew up in a home with abusive parents or drug addict parents who put pressure on them and made the world hard on them. Some parents were just less fortunate than others. They couldn't get a good job to support their home because they had too many kids. I think the people with a lot of money and rich families have a greater opportunity than less fortunate people because their parents are able to pay for college. Less fortunate people are offered financial aid and scholarships only if they work hard. Some people just don't feel like working hard and they start slacking and waste a good opportunity. The people overseas in Kenya aren't blessed with too many educational opportunities. A lot of people fail to realize that. People try to blame it on the race and it's not all about that. People try to blame the white man because they are going down the road that ends with being lost. I think this whole race issue is used as a crutch for African Americans to make them feel like it's someone else's fault. They just don't work hard enough. Anything is possible as long as you put your mind on the right track. Also, don't let the negative stuff get in your head and influence you to believe that you're going to end up being lost.**

## **Camden Prep**

### **LOST**

***By: Andre***

I'm lost because I'm in the wrong direction. I'm also lost because I don't know where to turn. All I know is negative. I'm lost when I'm drunk or high. How am I lost? Because I know it's wrong and it is harmful. I'm lost because I daydream about stuff I know I can do and don't do it. Lost because I don't know who I can trust or who I can't trust. Lost because I don't care almost or completely about anything. Lost because I am missing the point of life. Lost because I don't know why I don't treat girls right. Lost because I let my emotions think for me. Lost because when I dream it's negative. Lost because I have a family that cares for me, but I choose to go the other way. Lost because I don't know friends from family. Lost because all I can see is jail in my future when I try to think positive. Lost because I act and don't think. Lost because I don't know how to deal with it face to face.

## **Camden Prep**

### **LOST**

*By: Rashon*

**Lost is a way of saying that people from all over are Lost because of the things they do. Another way you could be Lost is if you don't have a family by your side. Your friends may be the only people close to you. You may feel Lost because the people who raised you are not here by your side when you are down and out. People need certain family or friends around so they don't have to feel like they don't belong in this world. Being lost can have you going crazy and can put you in places you don't want to be in, like jail. Many people that are in jail have an 85% chance that they're Lost. They may become Lost if someone doesn't hurry up and find them, or it will lead to jail or death. The condition people put themselves in to be Lost is that they have never been home trained. They did what they wanted their whole life without a positive role model to look up to throughout their life. Therefore, they wind up being a crack head or sitting on their butts their whole life on the corner, lost. For the people that are Lost or about to become Lost, they need to find GOD and get their life together and get that pain off them and find the light.**

## **Camden RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Christian*

**You lose things everyday but what I have lost is my freedom, repeatedly. Due to me losing my freedom, I have lost a lot of teenage years. During that time lost, I have missed going to my junior and senior prom. I have also lost the opportunity to go on my senior class trip to Florida. Last but not least I have lost the memories of watching my little brother mature.**

**One of the major things I have lost is my freedom. Freedom wasn't valued when I was home. My freedom when I was home didn't mean as much to me until I was sitting in a jail cell. Even when you're not sitting in a jail cell, freedom is lost when you don't have full control of your life. For example, you don't have control of what you want to do when you have to report to parole or probation offices on a regular basis. You can't make one bad mistake when you are under the law's supervision. When I am incarcerated I miss all the little things about freedom like eating what I want, when I want. What stresses me the most is that you can't come and go as you desire.**

**As a result of me losing my freedom, I have lost valuable time in my teenage years. I have lost what is supposed to be some of the happiest years of my life in high school. I didn't have a chance to go to my junior or senior prom; I will never get that time back. Well, sure I can go to a prom another time but there is nothing like going to your own prom with your junior and senior class. These years were supposed to be some of the happiest years of my life but due to my freedom being**

**taken, I didn't get to experience that feeling. Not to mention that I missed two of the most important events of my senior year. I missed going on my senior class trip to Florida and the chance to walk down the aisle to get my high school diploma.**

**The most important timely event I have lost due to my freedom being taken away is the years of watching my little brother mature. My kid brother turned five this year. The last time I was home on a consistent basis was when he was about three, but even when he was three I wasn't really there with him because I was too busy running the streets. My brother knows who I am but little kids learn something everyday and change their personality on a daily basis. I just missed watching him go through the cycle of life. I am going to get to be with him real soon and all I can do is spend time with him learning his likes and dislikes all over again.**

**Everything I have lost in my life so far is due to me losing my freedom, which was the gateway to the memories of high school and watching my little brother mature in the early stages of his life.**

## **Camden RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Leroy*

**To many people lost can mean or stand for just about anything such as time, misplacing something and so forth. However, lost to me means somewhat of the same thing, but on the other hand I have a lot of different perspectives. People such as myself look at the word lost and automatically think of things they no longer have or things that they use to be able to do, but cannot any longer. Both of these aspects are correct and I highly agree, however, if you were looking at a word-find and get side tracked, then realistically you haven't lost anything physically, just mentally. For example, I lost my freedom because of the choices that I have made and not in any way, shape or form do I glorify any of it. Freedom plays a major part in everyone's life because you can do just about anything you want to at any given time without asking permission. In my situation, I have to answer to everyone around me and I have to ask to move and go to the bathroom. Every night I am told when to eat and sleep, but the truth still remains that I can't be mad at anyone but myself. I put myself here and the people here are just doing their jobs.**

**However, throughout all of this I can only continue to stay free in one way and that is mentally. So to change things I am going to do what I have to do in order to stay free physically and mentally. No one likes to be constantly told what to do and how to act, especially when I consider myself a grown man. I love being free, having money and spending time with family, friends and females of all ages and nationalities.**

## **Camden RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Aaron*

**Sometimes I feel like I am losing my mind. I know that this is spiritual that I am experiencing. My spirit is in a constant battle with my flesh. It starts when I wake up and carries through the rest of the day. My only free time is when I am sleeping. Even that can be a battle. So many feelings and emotions. There are so many ups and downs. One minute I could be in a state of relaxation, then the next minute I end up being overwhelmed with worry. The harder I try to change my life, the harder the devil attacks my mind. That is his only weapon. I must admit that it can be a smart way of executing your opponent, but I choose not to give him the enjoyment. With GOD, anything and everything is possible. The devil has already been placed under my feet. From time to time my thoughts can hurt me. They feel so real at times. Everything starts from a thought. Once a thought is conceived it is turned into an action, whether the action is positive or negative. There have been numerous times when I've acted off of impulse and by the grace of GOD and his understanding I didn't suffer pain to the maximum.**

## **Campus RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Damir*

**There is a young boy who grew lost, abandoned, and neglected. The boy felt as though the world was against him in every way he could think of. As he got older the lost boy's heart grew colder. His mother was a drug abuser and his dad was in and out of state prison. The lost boy walked around blind, not knowing who to trust and who to play close. He misunderstood his life, and tried searching for emotional intelligence. He was also in search of self-efficacy.**

**Time went by and the young boy was in search of his lost and confusing life. He still did not find any answers. The boy didn't realize what he had. He was lost due to lack of Spiritual Guidance. He really didn't understand the true meaning of being lost, until he lost his grandmother while incarcerated. He also lost his little brother to the system; that's when he understood that lost was just a part of life.**

**The young boy grew mentally after his experience. The boy started to understand lost more and more each and everyday. He realized that lost was not always a bad thing, it was also a way to gain. Whenever you lose everything than all you can do is gain. The boy was in a situation where he had time to sit and develop a better interpretation of the word.**

**The reason I know so much about the young boy is because I am that young boy. I was lost. I was also a young man who didn't know which way to go due to my past experiences. I overcame that mind frame of it's me against the whole world. When I understood things more clearly, I began to excel rather than maintain the level I was at, which was misunderstanding the life of terms.**

## **Campus RCH**

### **LOST**

***By: Eric***

**I'm lost physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally lost. Where can I find myself? Where can I find the parts of me that I am missing?**

**I'm lost physically because I have no money and no place to go. Nothing and nobody to point me in the right direction. No one to help me out and no one to show me what is right and what is wrong. The worst thing that I ever lost physically was my freedom.**

**I'm lost mentally because all I think about are the streets, it's like everything to me. I lost respect for myself. I don't care about my life like I should. I'm currently losing the trust of my family members. That hurts. I'm even losing my self-esteem, every time I hear someone whisper I think that they are talking about me, and it gets to me.**

**I'm lost spiritually because I really have little hope for my future. I believe in God but my faith is not strong like it should be. I'm sometimes confused because it's so many religions and religious beliefs that I don't know which to follow.**

**I'm lost emotionally because I can't tell someone how I truly feel. I can't tell if I'm happy, sad, or excited because I don't really know. I can't tell them apart.**

**I'm like a lost ship with no destination and no power. If you think you can help me, or anyone just like me, help us find our way. Throw in the lifeline, help navigate the large lost ship and save it from its collision course. Don't sit back and watch us sink to our doom. To anyone that is listening,**

**Please help me find my way back home!**

# **Campus RCH**

## **LOST**

*By: Miguel*

**In my lifetime I have lost a lot of things, some not as important as others. Three things I lost were time, health, and family.**

**The first thing I lost was time. I have been losing time ever since I first started selling drugs. I now see that drug dealers have no life because all they do is hustle all day and everyday. I am aware it was a waste of time. Due to the drug game I lost education time. Once I started to hustle, like every other hustler, I would go to school once every couple of days. I see that was no life at all, that it was just a loss of time.**

**The second thing I felt I lost was my health. I began to lose my health from the first time I started smoking. If I wasn't in Campus right now, I would still be smoking. When I wasn't smoking I was very athletic and wanted to do everything, but then came the weed and cigarettes. I started getting tired real fast and I became lazier. I actually felt myself getting weaker, but at the time I didn't care. I wasn't concerned about my health. I thought smoking was good and I liked it. In the long run it only hurt me, which resulted in me losing my health.**

**Last, but not least I lost my family. My family is the most important thing I have. I realized that the life I was living was making me lose my family. I knew that it wasn't the life for me. All of my involvement with drugs, the smoking, and the violence was just pulling me further away from them. At times I wouldn't even come home at night. So through my selfishness and stupidity I lost my family.**

**In conclusion, two out of three things I lost I am slowly but surely getting back. I'm getting my health back because at this time I am not smoking so I'm not giving my body a hard time. My respiratory system is also getting better and I'm starting to work out. My family and I are also getting closer because I talk to them more. We are building a stronger relationship, but as for time, I am still losing it because I am in here, the Campus Program. When I go home, I will make sure I do things right so that I do not have another loss like this again.**

## **DOVES**

### **LOST**

*By: Tamyra*

**“Lost” is Confusion! You don’t know what to do, where to go, or even what to ask. I was “Lost” in my own life. I couldn’t figure out the purpose of me on this Earth (How, Why?). Where do I go? What do I do? Who or what do I ask? Is it that simple? It could have been!**

**“Lost” in the street life. I got in so much trouble for not taking the time and looking at the big picture that was painted for me. I came to the nature of hanging around drug dealers and hanging on corners. I used and abused marijuana and alcohol. “Lost.” I stayed in abusive relationships so I wouldn’t lose my mind looking for another guy who would treat me better. I was looking for love in all the wrong places. “Lost” in my feelings. How do you feel? What is a feeling?**

**Being around negative people and negative things has been apart of my life for 5 years. “Lost” in negativity didn’t help at all. I wanted much more but didn’t know where to find it. “Lost.” Everything I did was negative except for school. “Lost.” I became so used to getting in trouble it became a habit. “Lost” in happiness.**

**I did want more in life and I got it! I had to get locked up to really understand my purpose and of all things – me. I came to the D.O.V.E.S. Program, stayed for 10 ½ months and went home. While I was there I found my purpose and learned more about myself. My purpose was to do well in life. I didn’t have to get in trouble 24/7 to make myself feel better. In all reality, the streets didn’t love me they hurt me in the worse way. I was “Lost.” I was able to feel again, care about people and certainly care about myself. I had a chance to find myself, which I did!**

**NOW I’m back at the D.O.V.E.S. Program because I “Lost” control of my feelings, my thoughts, and my behaviors. I’m taking my time to truly think about what went wrong and if I was really ready to change. I’m not completely “Lost,” however, I “Lost” my freedom in the process of losing myself.**

## **DOVES**

### **LOST**

*By: Valerie*

**Lost, I lost me. I don't know because I'm lost. My life when I was 9 years old after my mother died on October 26, 1997, ever since then I have been lost. I still to this day don't know who I am, why? I'm lost. I lost my pride and self-respect. At age 13 when I started having sex, I lost my body to some guy who didn't love me and that's all I wanted. Lost. I lost my son at age 14 to somebody who I don't know. Why? I was lost doing drugs. Then on April 5, 2003, I lost my pride, self-respect, and I felt worthless because some guy who I didn't know followed me and took my body and didn't even care about me kicking, screaming and yelling for help. He kept going and didn't even care or have one bit of fear for what was going to happen to him. It was like he lost his mind and was somewhere else. After that, I still was lost but somewhere else. I never realized I was lost. I just became in a world of my own and thought I was normal. That stuff happens a lot. It's all I felt because I was lost. Now I'm 17 years old in my second program because I was lost and always ran from my problems. Today I'm lost because I don't know where to go and how not to be lost. It's been so long.**

# DOVES

## LOST

*By: Katherine*

**I was asked to write about the word “lost.” I don’t like the word lost. I use the word misplaced because “lost” is to lose forever. Majority of the folks my way said they lost an item, but in reality they misplaced the item.**

**Lost, unable to find one’s way. To me that one meaning goes a long way. What I believe in is a lost soul, a kid whose behavior is outrageous. No longer in possession of their soul, unable to act, function, or make progress. I was once lost, I found my soul and myself. Battered by comment, emotional abuse and verbal abuse. I lost my soul because I did not know me. I did not know life had more to offer. I lived in the ocean with the ship that was lost in the shipwreck. All the trial and tribulation had me caught up in a world I did not want to live in.**

**My eyes were lost, I was destroyed spiritually. I was completely absorbed. When people asked me what lost was I’d say, “You’re in the wrong place. You will find your way out. You can never be lost forever.” Outrageous kids are lost in the system because deep, dark secrets are lost within their heart.**

**The dead are lost in this world for us. One time I lost my mother in the supermarket I thought it was the end of the world. I found her though, so I really didn’t lose her, I misplaced her. She wasn’t gone forever neither was my soul. They say you never step into the same river twice, well I’m at the end of my river. The stream was so hard that it had me lost for 18 years. I’m willing to change today to step into that new river.**

**Lost, unable to find one’s way. This is what I believe in. I lost my old behavior and now I am losing my drug behavior to be a better person.**

## **Edison Prep**

### **LOST**

*By Timothy*

**Lost. What is it to be lost? Webster's Dictionary defines it as "unable to find one's way." Roget's Thesaurus finds this word synonymous to the words gone or missing. But I see lost through different eyes. My encounters with this entity have been hollow, pain staking experiences. I see lost through different eyes, in shades of light and dark. Lost is a single beat in the heart of confusion. Yes, I see lost through different eyes. When you are lost, you have fallen deep into a bottomless abyss.**

**Lost. This word, to me, triggers deep feelings. I have been lost in an emotional crisis. Emotional loss has a dizzying effect. It sucks away your desire. Do you know what it is like to be emotionally lost? It is like a dark buzzing in the back of your mind. It is a suffocating feeling. It is like being unstable, like being dragged along by every whim of emotion. It is to have no hope in sight, no relief from such plight. Lost is being disconnected from this world, feeling like an empty shell and feeling like a stranger in your own body looking out from a window within.**

**I first became lost as a young child. The very beginning of my existence started off not great but tolerable. A child has trouble comprehending violence. A child does not know hate, cannot fathom misery. But as a young child I experienced these things and they worked against me to snatch stability from beneath my feet.**

**Lost had me in its grip. It clutched me in its menacing jaws. Confusion latched into me, ripping at my soul for a feast. There was a point in my life when I looked into a mirror, and I did not know who I truly was. Since I only knew sadness, I had no idea what my true personality was. Could I laugh? Could I sing? I was a stranger to myself.**

**Lost, what is it to be lost? There are many definitions for lost. I bare witness to only one. It is a swirl of emotions that work to cast me out of a sane, rational world, to throw me into an unknown dimension of life. Without a place, without a purpose, and without a feeling of security one is lost.**

## **Edison Prep**

### **LOST**

*By: Leonard*

**Being lost in my perspective is that I am incarcerated. I lost my teenage years. I lost a lot of opportunities by making poor decisions in life.**

**I was lost in my own world. I lost my youth by being in correctional institutions. I will never get back my teenage years that I lost. I lost my fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth years of life by being locked away from my family, friends and society.**

**Due to the fact that I was incarcerated at a young age, I never really had the opportunities to go to the prom, watch late night movies with a girlfriend, or enjoy wonderful things with my family. I was lost when I committed my crime. I had nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. I was under the influence of drugs. I had the impression that I had to be cool to impress others. I realize the real meaning of cool is “not so hot.”**

**In conclusion, I would like to advise any teenager who is incarcerated or heading down that road to think about his or her future or you will find yourself lost in the system.**

## **Essex RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Curtis*

**As I wander through this familiar place, I feel so lost. I ask myself, “Do I belong here and does anyone belong here for that matter?” ... a question that has been stagnant in my mind for a long time. As I begin to ponder and think about why it is I feel so lost when the path I seek is staring me in the eyes like an eagle does its prey, I’m empty trying to find my way. So many people feel as I do, but no one expresses it. So many of us are lost in this world and aren’t fully aware of it.**

**This isn’t the kind of lost when you don’t know where you are physically, but rather a lost that one feels mentally and emotionally. Even maps cannot help this kind of lost. One can know where one is, where one is going, but never know how exactly one gets there. In life we aren’t handed the tools to carry out our purpose, we must seek them out. Without a solid plan, one can never achieve true enlightenment, which in essence is being found. You cannot say you are found if you haven’t reached true enlightenment.**

**Thousands of young children are growing up lost and with no guidance. This is precisely why society is faced with so much crime, violence and gangs. Our youth are lost and they’re turning to a life of crime because of it. An individual can have loving parents, go to the best schools and live in an almost crime free environment and still make bad decisions. Being lost is a state of mind and if you don’t change**

**that state of mind you can destroy your life before it begins.. Being lost is a disease, a very contagious disease. Disease spreads and if you find yourself with those who are lost, you too will find yourself in darkness.**

**There is a way you can prevent yourself from becoming lost, ask questions, ask lots of them and keep quiet to hear the answers. My English teacher once wrote a quote on the board that read, “A wise man isn’t the man who gives the right answers, but rather the man who asks the right questions.” That quote stuck in my head like a fly does to its trap. Its profoundness spoke to me quietly and gently, only I could hear it. That is when it dawned on me, in order to prevent me from ever becoming lost again, all I must do is ask all the right questions, and seek the answers I need to make it.**

**A wise man once told me that if you soak a sponge in water then squeeze it, you’ll get water and if you soak a sponge in milk then squeeze it, you’ll get milk. I believe what he meant was if all your life all you know is negativity and don’t know what to do with it, what are you going to give the world in return once it squeezes you? But if you choose to absorb only good and positive things, you’ll always be in harmony with the world. If you place yourself in the predicament of becoming lost, you will become lost and perhaps never find your way. One must always stay clear of the dark and surround oneself with light and all the right questions.**

## **Essex RCH**

### **LOST**

*By Donell*

**What does it truly mean to be lost? Could it be a place where you do not want to be found or a place where you cannot be found? Most of the time we tend to get lost mentally rather than physically. It all reverts to the same question, what it truly means to be lost.**

**I remember being released into the real world after having been restricted by society for a little more than (7) seven months. I returned to society on August 16<sup>th</sup>, the birthday of my father. For about 2 ½-3 months everything was normal, life couldn't have been better. My social life was where it needed to be in order for me to feel whole. I found myself without a job, sure I had money but I felt it wasn't enough. Once I realized I wasn't happy with what I had, I began to feel lost as to what my next move in life would be.**

**I took a detour from where I thought my life was heading into a life of crime. I wanted money and was willing to do almost anything for it. At the time I really didn't see myself as lost because my name had given privilege in the streets, so whatever I wanted I took it or had very easy access to it. I remember I hit the streets like a nosebleed. All the running I was doing, but did I find my way? I never did find my way, perhaps I should have looked further away from my eyes reach. I violated probation and ended up further away from being found.**

**While I was wandering lost, someone sought me out, not the individual I would have hoped. He found me and placed me back away from society. Awaiting my destiny, I found myself in constant struggles, both mentally and physically. I**

**remember her telling me, while I was away from the world, she was pregnant. For a moment I believed my mind was playing tricks on me. I felt I was going deeper and deeper into a very dark place. I truly felt I would never be found and what would become of this life I helped create? All I could tell myself is that I must find my way and make it home again.**

**On April 15, 2005 I was sentenced to serve time at Essex Residential Community Home. Essex is very close to my home but for some reason I still wasn't fully satisfied at the time. I still felt a sense of loneliness in my life, I was lost I guess, that's why I felt so lonely. Just as I was beginning to get ahead on my life, I lost someone near and dear to me. On March 31, 2005 some coward took the life of my uncle, a man that was like a big brother to me. That day on Memorial Day is when I began to see life for what it really was and still is. Ever since that moment in time up until now, I've found myself. As long as I am found I will do my very best never to get lost again.**

## **Green RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Antoine*

**When the fridge is empty and the rent is due, your children need clothes and working seems worthless. When life had given you a beating you thought wasn't coming. When you wake up where you don't want to be and have no plan on getting out. When all you know are cries and curses and hate runs through your heart, then you are lost in the struggle. Everybody that went through a struggle made them the people they are today either positive or negative. For some people the struggle turned them into selfish animals that cares only for themselves. For some people the struggle put them in a grave. For some people the struggle was a part of the past.**

**For me, my struggle was watching my mother struggle with bills, work, stress, and money problems. My mother did the best she could to provide her children with food, clothes, and keep a roof over me and my sisters' heads. A single parent taking care of four kids, I know that it is no easy job. As I grew my struggle turned into a hustle. I was too young to get a job so I turned to the streets as a way to help out my house, my wants and my needs. Losing something is not worse than being lost because when you lose something, nine times out of ten it can be replaced or found. When you are lost you have to find yourself and starting the search is the hardest job.**

## **Green RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Pierre*

**I feel as though when people are lost anywhere they tend to feel nervous, frustrated, and a little scared. I also feel that not a soul should be lost in anyway. Here are some ways that a person can be lost.**

**One way of being lost is being lost in the system. I think that being lost in the system happens a lot in the current times (1990-2004). I also think that being lost in the system is very frustrating on the inmate that is lost. Usually when people get lost in the system they tend to do a lot of vicious things while they're incarcerated. They feel as though they have nothing to lose, but what they don't know is that when they do get found they would have so many counts of murders in the facilities that they would have to spend the rest of their lives incarcerated for the things they did in jail. Most people that are lost in the system never get found and end up dying incarcerated. One thing you could do so you won't get lost in the system is: don't get locked up, and if you do get locked up, you should give the facility the truth about your information. That is one way of being lost and what happens in the process of being lost in the system.**

**Another way of being lost is being lost on the highway. I think that being lost on the highway happens a lot too. The reason it happens a lot is that many people make mistakes reading the signs. One way that problem can be solved is making the signs more clear. The reason I said that they should make the signs more clear is because the signs we have now are very confusing. The ones to me that are very**

**confusing are the signs on Highway 1 & 9, which is used to go from Newark (Essex) to Jersey City (Hudson). So, that is two ways of being lost.**

**My final and most important way of getting lost is mentally. I think that happens often, even though you don't hear about it often. Mostly people that had very tragic things happen to them are the ones that are lost mentally. Usually you can tell if a person is mentally lost by observing what their actions are, like usually staying to themselves, feeling uncomfortable when being touched, and having unnecessary reactions- like taking things out of proportion when it can be settled easily and calmly. People that are lost mentally are exposed and brought to the mental hospital. This is my final way of being lost and even though there are many ways of being lost, I only chose these three because I felt as though these are the most important.**

## **Hudson Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Damone*

**Something that I lost was my grandparents. When I lost them I lost my mind because they were the only people that could calm me down. They passed when I was about ten. That's when I lost my mind.**

**My grandparents did anything for me and took me anywhere. But one day I woke up and sat on my grandfather's lap and gave him a hug because he was about to go to work. As soon as I said, "grandpa I love you" and he got in his car, I looked out the window and he just started to shake. I got my grandmother and she just started crying and I was very nervous. The next day she told me he died and I lost my mind. That's probably the reason I am in this program now because nobody does for me what he used to.**

**Then about two months passed and my grandmother never got out of bed. She only got up to use the restroom and I didn't like that. Then she passed away on me next and I was really growing up without the two of them in my life.**

**About two years later I started getting locked up and I really think that because I lost them I lost my mind and my heart because I loved them with all of it.**

**Now I have gotten over it because I know I can't bring them back. They are already gone for a long time and they live in my heart. That's all that really matters to me.**

**I'm trying to do better in my life, trying to grow up like them and be great grandparents how they were to me and my brothers and sisters. My aunt had to take**

**care of my four brothers, one sister, and about ten cousins because most of my family was locked up.**

**To tell the truth, I want to have a better life and I'm trying to make it in life and I want to be a leader not a follower.**

## **Hudson Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Jerney*

**Something that I lost was my father. I was about eight years old when this happened in June of 1997.**

**I was in my grandmother's room playing a game and my mother came and asked my grandmother where I was. My grandmother said in the room, so she came in and said, "Jerney, I have to tell you something." And asked if I was listening. I said yes and then she said, "Your father just died." So I said stop lying. She said she was telling the truth, so then she asked if I was okay. I didn't say anything to her, I just started crying and then I left the house and sat in front of the door just thinking this can't be true because I just had talked to him.**

**The day of the funeral when we got there, my grandmother had already walked in and she thought I was behind her but I was still outside because I didn't want to go because I was so mad.**

**Ever since that happened I've been getting in trouble in school, getting locked up, fighting and all that crazy stuff.**

**But still to this day forward all the stuff my father ever bought I still have because I love him.**

**JMSF**

**LOST**

*By: Antonio*

**Lost is when you can do something wrong and think nothing of it.**

**Lost is when you can drink up all your rent money and think nothing of it.**

**Lost is when you can insult someone and care less about how they feel afterwards.**

**Lost is when you can pretend to be something other than yourself.**

**Lost is when you can wake up spitting and cursing and go to sleep spitting and cursing.**

**Lost is when you can hate the person that's trying to love and help you.**

**Lost is when you can turn your face away from the word of God.**

**Lost is when you can't forget or forgive out of the kindness of your heart.**

**Lost is when you can be as cold-hearted as the devil himself.**

**Lost is when you can't fight off the people that are trying to bring you down.**

**Lost is when you shake off all the people that were in your corner.**

**Lost is when you can see the blood of another human being and still can sleep with the same mind.**

**Lost is when you can sell bad drugs to another one of your brothers and sisters just to get a new pair of sneakers.**

**Lost is when you can disrespect someone's mother or daughter and go home and stare at your mother and sister.**

**Lost is when you can't sit in the same house of God with someone you know you did something to on the streets.**

**Lost is when you have to look over your shoulder every five seconds to see if another man is going to put a bullet in your back.**

**Lost is when you have to sleep in several different houses because you're afraid the cops are going to kick in your mother's door.**

**Lost is when you have to hug your loved ones in shackles.**

**Lost is when you're 21 years of age and can't read or write or barely spell your name.**

**Lost is when you don't know if you got this girl pregnant last night.**

**Lost is when you have to sleep in a cell with 4 or 5 people.**

**Lost is when you can't talk to your folks because they don't accept collect calls.**

**Lost is when you look in your refrigerator and see nothing but a rotten tomato and a couple of dead roaches.**

**Lost is when your baby is crying at 2 o'clock in the morning because she doesn't have milk.**

**Lost is when you have to bury someone you really loved because the mistakes you made.**

**That's lost to me! What's lost to you? Or are you lost yourself? Are you wondering where you are going to get your next meal from? Or are you wondering if you're going to be dead or killed in the next hour? Or do you even care? That's the question you need to start asking yourself. Because as for me, I was lost but now I'm found and I'm trying to help you find yourself too.**

**JMSF**

**LOST**

*By: Jessie*

**Since my earliest age, my mom and dad left me wounded mentally and emotionally. I have never shown a symptom of pain or stress. I've never told them how much they hurt me. The one thing that plays over and over in my mind as I pursue my nightly sleep and toss and turn is that I am lost. I try so hard to lose the feelings as I abrade the cruel thoughts of being someone I am not, but I am lost. I have slept in driveways and public parks, only because I am lost. I have hurt and said foul things to people but only because I am lost. I am not searching for a better way only because I am lost. The way of life as a cost seems highly abstruse but only because life is hard and I am lost.**

**I've seen my mother prostitute and do drugs and now she is lost...young people like myself joining gangs only because we are lost...I have a deep adoration for the streets...but notice I am lost...As I ponder inside my luke warm cell and collect thoughts I realize that these places were designed to destroy the black race. The black race genocide but yet we still kill and demean each other because we are lost...I would sell my soul to find my way back home. Will you help me? I am lost. People have sat for hours and were determined to figure me out, my style and why I am so violent with such a cold heart. Then I say to them the answer is I am lost. Bad things everyday bring you closer to being lost and it's the same all the time, that's the saddest part. So before you are gone, just learn a lesson or become what is known as a lost adolescent.**

**JMSF**

***LOST***

***By: Antonio***

**The part that's lost is your soul, mind and heart. You are the other part as an innocent bystander that's lost to the outside world. Lost to the free nature to be a person instead of a machine, running by a destructive battery that will soon leave you to rest alone. Your job is to free yourself.**

**Free yourself from the pain that leads you to suicide; the pain that leads you to drugs; the pain that leads you to murder.**

**Free yourself from the violence and the crime that leads you to mischief; that leads you to abuse; that leads you to rot in a jail cell; that leaves you to die.**

**Most people that are lost are the people without love and affection. They're lost and stranded searching for a way out but come to find themselves digging deeper, leading to self destruction. Looking for a way to cover up how they feel and how they are outside of their original self to prove that they are someone special, not knowing deep down inside that they are.**

**I compare lost people to the wind because the wind blows in any direction it wants and a lost person is not found. Just as the wind, he or she goes in any direction they feel is right blowing and moving anything that's in its path and blowing over any and everything. But there is a difference between wind and a lost person. It is that**

**you can't see the wind, you can just feel it and the wind does not function like a human but a lost person you can see, feel, smell, touch, love and also hurt.**

**Mostly people that are lost to the nature of a person are the people that come from the "ghetto." Rough towns that have a hard background and people that come from bad areas- all they know is where they come from and what they've seen and what they did. Most of them keep that same mentality and the rest of them want a way out, want something new or something to love them and show them a better way but sometimes feel trapped. Trapped, not knowing which direction to go or who to go to. So my definition of lost is....**

**Lost Ones      Searching      Together**

# **JRAC**

## **LOST**

*By: Raymond*

**My name is Raymond. During these past couple of years I have been in and out of the system. I have seen judges and have been in various Detention Centers. Now I'm here today in JRAC serving my sentence. While I have been incarcerated I have lost a lot of things. The 3 most important things that I have lost are my freedom, time and holidays.**

**Since being locked up, I have lost my freedom of choice day by day. Nowadays I am told what to wear instead of being able to pick what I want. I am told when to sleep and wake-up. I am told when to do this and when to do that. All because I chose something dumb to do when I was at home that got me here. Where people tell me what to do and I have no choice but to listen and do what they say. When I was home I still had to follow rules, but I had much more freedom doing what I wanted to do.**

**Another good thing that I had but lost was my time. In here I have a certain time to eat, play cards, watch TV or do whatever. Now I am on their time and follow their rules. The time I miss the most is the time I spent with my family and friends on a daily basis. Missing out on the parties that are going on and just hanging out. I have been doing a lot of thinking about how I can change the outcome of this next time. Hopefully there won't be a next time.**

## **JRAC**

### **LOST**

*By: Michael*

**I have lost many things throughout my life. There are only a few things I have lost that have affected me greatly. It has also affected my family. The things that I have lost or missed out on were family functions, most of my teenage years - three summers, and my pet snakes, Contessa and Jimmy.**

**The thing that I have lost that has affected me the most is the loss of going to family and school functions. I have wasted my adolescence trying to be grown up. I kept getting into trouble and doing drugs. I didn't do the things that I should have been doing. For example, doing things with my family or going to school activities. I missed out on birthday parties, cookouts, etc. I also lost holidays, especially Christmas and Thanksgiving. I have spent my youth in jails and institutions. The worst thing about it is I cannot get any of those years back.**

**Another thing I have lost that I cannot get back is the last 3 summers. The first one I was in Ocean County Detention Center, the second one I was in Integrity House and this one I will be in Jamesburg. I cannot get these carefree summers back either because when I get home I will be 18 and will have to get a job. I will not be able to hang out on the beach and surf.**

## **Monmouth Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Felix*

**One morning, after waking up from a good night's sleep, I realized something was wrong. From always knowing what to do, I now found myself lost deep in thought. I felt like a young boy, with a mature mind, sitting there with the weight of the world sitting on my shoulders. I didn't know where to go.**

**I tried to find myself, but life is one big puzzle. It seems like I was thinking with my head, but not following my heart. My heart was broken at a young age. This made it difficult for me to focus on the path I was traveling. I tried to think why my life was like this, but deep inside I already knew. I couldn't explain something that brought tears to my eyes and melted my heart.**

**Dealing with life's issues was hard to swallow. Life made me make poor decisions out of anger. I was always depressed, but moved on. There was always a time in my life where I found myself in deep thought. There was a side of me that kept going and another side that just kept taking me down.**

**Life was a symptom that I couldn't figure out, but it was there the whole time. The life experiences that I have been through brought me to where I'm at now. That's why I feel like I was being tested the whole time of my life. The answer to my confusion isn't about finding an answer, it's about finding myself.**

## **Monmouth Day**

### **LOST**

*By: Javon*

**I don't know how it all happened. It just did. Sitting back, thinking about it, it all started at the age of twelve. That was my age when I committed my first crime.**

**I can remember that incident like it happened yesterday. The details are unimportant now. What is important is how and why I became lost. I became lost because of peer pressure. I did something because I wanted to fit in with the older kids.**

**I am fourteen years old now. For the first time in a long time I feel like I am in a good place at the program I am in. Instead of feeling negative peer pressure in the program, I feel a sense of leadership. I am learning to make positive decisions. Also, I have supported my peers when they need it.**

**People don't understand how kids get jammed up. Street life is crazy! There are gangs, drugs, weapons, and crime going on everywhere.**

**To conclude, my advice to others has a lot to do with making better decisions. For example, hanging out with older negative kids, doing drugs, and committing crimes will only harm you in the long run. Keep focused on the positive and respect yourself. This way you will not lose yourself like I did, unfortunately.**

# **Monmouth Day**

## **LOST**

***By: Shakeria***

**My name is Shakeria and my essay is about being and feeling lost in this cold world.**

**It all started when I was very young, getting suspended from school every other week. I don't know why I did what I did. I was disrespectful and rude. I was involved in fights, just doing anything to get into trouble. I had a good family at home. My mom was there, but my dad wasn't. I was lucky to have a step dad who treated me like his own. As I got older, my behavior worsened. I began staying out later than I was supposed to. I didn't listen to my mom. I just did whatever I wanted to do.**

**I was involved with a boy who was a little older than me. When I was in the fifth grade we became more involved. When I went to the sixth grade I became pregnant. That's when I felt I was lost. I was way too young to have a baby. By the time my mom found out I was about 5 or 6 months pregnant. She took me to get an abortion, but I was too far along. I was very hurt, but she hurt more. I was very sorry I put her through that. Three months before I had my daughter, my one and only mother was taken away from me. That was the second time I felt lost and alone.**

**I went to stay with my grandma in Neptune. Things were good. At first I went to school, while my baby stayed at the babysitter's. After a short time, things started turning. I started skipping classes, staying out past my curfew, and not listening to my grandma. Many bad things happened after that. I went to Y.D.C. Now I'm in a program called Monmouth Day.**

**I have advice to all young girls: do good in school, listen to your parents or whomever you live with, and stay away from boys because they will tell you whatever you want to hear to get what they want. Boys come and go. You have your whole life ahead of you. Find yourself before you get lost like I did.**

**NJTS**

**LOST**

*By: Brian*

**To me the word lost is broken down into meanings for each letter. L.O.S.T. (lots of soul training). To me the word is used to describe people who need to understand their soul or better yet understand themselves. Today people are trying to be something that they're not. The soul is the purest part of us. It is our beauty and all of the great things in this life, as well as the next life reflected. There are three ways you could choose to live your life. You could put your hands over your eyes and your heart and not see your soul and just simply be lost.**

**You could see your soul piece by piece like watching a slide show that flickers in and out to the next picture or you could see your soul all the time like looking at the sun.**

**Whatever way of life you choose to live will make a huge difference. When you can't see your soul you have to struggle to find meaning, you feel anxious and L.O.S.T. That's where the word L.O.S.T. comes into play. If you can't see your soul you are lost in a bundle of discomfort. If you can't see your soul, you can't see yourself. Like a vampire looking into a mirror, you have no image.**

**Now when you get into the whole image thing, that's where the soul image comes into play. If you notice most of the people that surround you are putting up an image, like movie stars on the big screen. They may seem like the biggest person in the world. The people that worship movie stars start to think that's how they really are but in all reality the movie star is just a regular person who has a great job. With all the attention they are getting they feel as though they are the biggest of all. The only reason they feel this way is because their image will not let them think different. They are L.O.S.T.**

**The same goes for the people who worship music. The word L.O.S.T. can be used in many different ways but I feel as though that's the best way to put the word L.O.S.T.**

**together. I say this because people now are lost, they have no soul training and they do not understand themselves. Like the people who worship music, they figure because the music is violent they have to be the same way. There are hands over their eyes and heart and they can't see the real them. They are lost when they remove their hands; they will see the real them and their soul.**

**They will see that they do not have to be violent. They will realize that their soul is all about peace, love, and all the good things in life. All it takes is a little bit of soul training and people will understand the positive things in life instead of the negative. Then maybe the world wouldn't be such a corrupt place to live in. All people have to do is find their way and stop being lost and once they find their way, they have to train themselves to be better.**

**That is my perception of the word lost. The fate of the world depends on the people who have already found their way; the people who have already been through soul training. The world needs us to guide all of the lost people to the light and make it a better place**

## **PAY Program**

### **LOST**

***By: Victor***

**The state of being lost is when a person doesn't know what's going on or where he or she is. One could be lost in a strange environment or one could be lost in one's own mind. Confused? There are so many ways one can be lost. Any place and/or anything unfamiliar is a potential "getting lost" situation.**

**When I get lost I'm scared that something is going to happen to me and that I will not be able to get back to the place I'm most familiar. I can get lost in many different ways. I can be lost in my head or I can be lost on the ball field. Losing a game doesn't mean I can't find it, however, it could leave me feeling like I'd want to! Lost can mean you lost a family member like the person passed away. You can be lost in thought, unable to act, function or make progress. Spiritually or physically destroyed can be lost or unable to find.**

**Sometimes when you're lost it feels like you don't have control of the situation. I think sometimes kids are lost because they didn't have their parents with them throughout their life. When you're lost, you feel help less. When you are locked up you're lost because you are not doing anything in that period of time that you are locked up.**

**I was lost in Newark. I did not know how to get back to New Brunswick. I was on a street called Vermont Avenue in Newark and I was asking people for directions because I was lost. I was scared because I didn't know where I was. I thought I wasn't going to ever make it home. That's what I think lost means.**

**For example, here is another way to express lost in a relationship. Your girl leaves you for another man, but you still want to be with her. Then, she breaks up with her new man and you tell her, “Now that it didn’t work out, when are you going to give me the chance to show you that I’m the one you should be with?” That’s what it’s like when someone loses their girl, you lost her and that’s it. She’s not in your life. You can be lost in your mind because you are going to be lost and helpless and you can’t do anything about it because you lost her. It seems that when any loss occurs there are steps that lead towards accepting the outcome. First, you are in shock and then you get angry because you never wanted it to happen. After that you start denying it and in some situations you would bargain and finally you accept it. That’s what lost means to me. There are so many ways you can be lost.**

## **PAY Program**

### **LOST**

*By: Spencer*

**Lost, for me, has multiple meanings. Lost could be physical or mental. I could be lost in my work, not knowing what I'm doing. I could have either lost a game or I could have lost my sense of direction. There have been times when I've been lost on the job. When I was lost on my way to work, it was because I was concentrating on the subject matter related to a test. However, I didn't study very often and as a result I didn't know the answers – and became lost. I ended up failing that test.**

**In a football game when we played against New Brunswick Pop Warner, our quarterback got injured and I got injured. I was a running back and my knees got badly injured. The team had three losses that game (the quarterback, the game and me). I was out for the rest of the season and that was a big loss for me because I wasn't part of the championship game. I lost my sense of direction when I was at my cousin's house in East Orange for the first time. We went to the park and started playing basketball. He insisted on sitting out and when he did, somehow he left the park. Time went by and it started getting dark. He didn't come back so I started walking. I proceeded to get lost just like I thought I would, but then shortly afterwards I found his house. I was lost at that point in time.**

**There were wanted posters for this two-year-old German Shepard that was lost. It was small, white and had green eyes and all I was focused on was there was a three hundred-dollar reward for anyone who found it. My friend and I looked around for it and found it. We called in as soon as possible to have someone pick it**

**up. The owner came to pick it up and gave us the money. I was so happy because we ended up finding something that was lost.**

**At one point in time everyone has lost someone who was really close to them, such as a friend or a loved one. I have experienced both. I lost someone who was my best friend when I was younger. I lost a friend, who I hung out with everyday and he was my only friend. We fought over a basketball game and who was better. That was three years ago and till this day we still don't talk.**

## **PAY Program**

### **LOST**

*By: Jeff*

**When I was younger I felt really lost and hopeless, especially the time when someone from my family died. My little nephew was in the hospital for a while and became very sick. Some of my family members, that I hadn't seen in a long time, made the trip to come down to see him. I remember seeing their faces. The thing that stands out in my memory is that they all looked worried. Although I was young, I knew things weren't looking good for my little nephew. He didn't make it and I experienced a loss that I didn't really understand- nor like very much.**

**Another time later in my life, I jumped on the bus one day to go to Downtown Newark so I could shop for some 'gear.' I knew it was a long ride, so I threw on my headphones. It was hot and I remember starting to feel sleepy and before I knew it I was waking up looking out the window and noticed that the bus wasn't moving. I looked around and there wasn't a soul on the bus- including the driver. I saw dozens of buses all around mine and the "night-quiet" felt eerie. I realized that I had fallen asleep and it felt like I was in the "bus graveyard." The driver didn't see me in the back because I had slumped below his view.**

**Lost and alone like never before, I pried open the door and found my way to the guardhouse. The guard was shocked to see me and I told him what happened. He laughed! Even though I was mad at him for laughing, I was grateful when he called my house for a ride. I got fear instead of gear that day and haven't fallen asleep on a bus since.**

## **Pinelands**

### **LOST**

*By: Jamil*

**I'm running and running and I can't stop or else I'll be caught. I must keep running and dodging all obstacles in my way and I must keep moving at a fast speed. *Oh no! Watch out!* I almost tripped and fell. I tell myself to keep running and keep moving. *Don't stop and don't look back.***

**Suddenly my body freezes and shuts down and I'm lost. Then, my mind and surroundings go blank. *FLASH!* As I open my eyes the light is so bright. I begin to feel very scared and I can't see past a squint. The room was unrecognizable and still remarkably bright. *Wait a minute.* I can faintly hear someone talking.**

**"He's here boss. We got him and there's no way he's escaping now."**

**Then, I hear another man speaking, "Sir, what is our next step? Where do we go from here?"**

**A scratchy voice responds, "This is the moment of truth on his part. Now, we must go in there and show him."**

**As they walk slowly into view this loud sounds begins to ring in my ears. Someone grabs me suddenly and I jump. *Whoa! Thank God.* To my relief, it is only my alarm clock and this is all a dream. As I walk to take a shower I feel paranoid and lost because my dream was too disturbing. After showering I go downstairs to prepare my breakfast. I nearly faint when I reach the bottom step when I see two men at my front door looking inside. As I move furtively to the kitchen, I let out a sigh of relief. They are my neighbors. *Poor guys- they've been worried about me for so long.***

**After breakfast, I go to my living room to watch some news and the weather report catches my eye. *De JA vu.* I feel as though I'm reliving this moment. *Naw! Couldn't be.* A few minutes later it hits me: this sullen weather was all in my dream. As I sit dazed thinking about my dream, a sudden hard knock startles me- someone banging on my front door. When I answer it, a familiar scratchy voice says to me, "Son, we're here to show you something."**

**They grab me and I'm back in the white room. I'm strapped to a chair and the room goes dark; then, my past life begins flashing right in front of me. As I sit teary eyed, I am watching all of my feelings of hurt and pain hitting me in the face.**

**These feelings of mine that I've held in and not told anyone about are now bashing me in the face. *Oh no!* The floor drops and I'm running again, but now I'm really lost with no light besides me except sudden flashes of lightning. *Bam!* Something hits me really hard, a question that I haven't seemed to grasp. *What am I running from?***

**Then, a voice says, "You're running from yourself and no matter how long you run, I'll always catch up to you. Remember that."**

**Astonished, I wonder where this voice is coming from and then it continues, "I am coming from inside of you. I am your conscience."**

# **Valentine RCH**

## **LOST**

*By: Kristina*

**The word lost may have numerous meanings to a variety of people. To me, when I think of the word lost, I think of being stuck. It's the place right before you choose to go down the right or left path; the impression of being lonely or confused.**

**In life we may head down the hard road, which is the long way regarding many bumps and obstacles. At the same time there is an easy road, which is the shortcut to the destination of success. I chose the long road.**

**In 2002, my father was shot and killed. After the tragedy, my family, including myself, noticed a downfall in my life. I began smoking, getting into fights and being very disobedient. My father was not there to correct me and give me discipline. My mother had a tough time with trying to play both roles. She had five kids to support on her own so money became tight and used sparingly.**

**I had always felt as though one parent just wasn't good enough. I had a lot of confusion in my head, due to the fact that my father's killer had never been identified. Therefore, it made me upset to think that this person had gotten away with the hurt and depression he caused my family and myself.**

**Now, I sit in Valentine Residential Community Home to learn from my mistakes and better myself. Some people tend to think that being incarcerated means you are a failure and you have messed up your life completely. However, I disagree. I look at my stay here and think of this as the part of my life when I turned around and headed towards the right direction. Maybe I did take the long way. If only I would have taken the advice my loved ones had given me, but I learned from my mistakes.**

**Experience is the best lesson. Even though I've made mistakes, I know that through it all, I have done it. I have made my way through. As Faith Evans said, "If I had to do it all again, I wouldn't take away the rain because I know it made me who I am." I have become strong, independent and also confident. I know that I can go anywhere I want to in life. I was lost before, but now I have found myself.**

## **Valentine RCH**

### **LOST**

*By: Brittney*

**Lost means a lot to me. It took me being completely lost in life, to realize that I needed to get my life together. I had a lot of people trying to show me the right way to go, but I ignored them, went the way I wanted to go, did things the way I wanted to do and got “lost.” I was always hardheaded and had to learn the hard way about everything. Now, I’m really learning how to find myself again and get my life together.**

**It started when I was about 8 years old, when my mom became mentally ill with schizophrenia and bi-polar disease. I was always so confused by her illness and how she acted and didn’t understand why she wasn’t the same mom from before. Eventually as I got older I learned to live with it. When I was 10 my mom couldn’t keep me because she was in and out of the hospital and the courts wouldn’t allow me to go live with my dad because he already had my brother in a small apartment. I had to go live with a friend of the family. I lived with them for about 2 years. That was the start of all my problems because I was so confused. I didn’t realize that having to live with them was not my fault because I thought my parents didn’t want me. So, I started acting and thinking bad because I thought that maybe then the people I was living with wouldn’t want me and then my mom would have to take me back. I ended up moving back with my mom after 2 years, but the damage was already done. I was 12 years old and had already been smoking cigarettes and weed for about a year. I only lasted for 1 summer with my mom and she sent me to live with my dad. I lived with my dad and brother for a few months, but he had to send me back to my mom’s house because I got him evicted from his apartment. When he was at work I would have so many people over the house that the neighbors would complain everyday. I just kept going back and forth with parents and doing really bad in school and getting in trouble in and out of school. At the end of the summer, going into 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my dad moved me from Bergen County to Middlesex County with him and his fiancé because my brother got locked up and he thought I was going to end up the same way. That just made me worse. By the middle of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my dad let me move back to my mom’s house. I only stayed with her until June and**

**then she kicked me out and I had to go live with my sister. I eventually had to go back to my dad's house in July. That September I went back to school as a freshman again with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes because I missed so much school the year before, so they failed me. I only lasted ½ a year and then they failed me again for absences. I'll never forget what one teacher told me. She said, "You might as well not come back to school anymore because when you actually come you never do anything but get in trouble. Your grades don't mean anything when you're a problem." So I never went back to school again. There was nothing my parents could do to get me to go to school. Eventually everyone gave up on me and I gave up on myself. What my problem has been since I was 11 years old in 6<sup>th</sup> grade was that I always hung around people a lot older than me. I wanted to and I did grow up fast. I was doing stuff when I was 11 years old that people don't usually try until they're 16 or 17 years old (my age now). I felt obligated to grow up fast because of what I've been through and because I was always hanging around older people and wanted to try what they were doing.**

**As of right now, I'm a resident at Valentine RCH. I'm here for 1<sup>st</sup> degree armed robbery and 2 weapon charges. When I went to court, I was supposed to get waived up. The prosecutor filed for a waiver, but my lawyer got it dropped. My sentence was to successfully complete this program and a 3-year suspended sentence on probation.**

**This was my 2<sup>nd</sup> chance at life and my way to find myself. I learned to never live with regrets because you should be able to learn from every situation. You can be sorry for something you do wrong, but never regret it because you can always take something good out of everything bad. Even though I'm in a program, away from my family and I have a bad charge, this was what I needed in order to realize everything that was wrong in my life and that I need to change. For a long time I was completely lost in life, but now I'm finding myself again and fixing all the wrongs I've done.**

## Valentine RCH

### LOST

*By: Ciara*

When I was home, I felt as though I was lost because I did not know myself. I first started off by smoking cigarettes. I thought it was cool and always wanted to just try it and see why everybody does it. Then I went from cigarettes to weed to alcohol. I never really had a reason for drinking or smoking. I just wanted to be down because the people I hung with did it, so I figured why couldn't I do it? Then as I started to do it more and more each day, I realized I was hanging around the wrong type of people. People who robbed, people who killed, people who used drugs and drank alcohol, people who just did nothing but negative things. Then by hanging with them, it led me to do negative things just like they did, but I was worse than them. I started to rob, not go to school, and not come home for a couple of days. I wanted to do what I wanted to do and nobody could tell me differently. I did not care who I was hurting while being negative. Even if I was hurting myself I did not care.

Then it got to the point where I had to have weed so whatever I had to do to get it I did. I would steal, rob, lie, whatever it took I did. The things I was doing got so bad that I started to feel low about myself. I would think to myself, "Why am I getting high everyday? Spending all my money on drugs and alcohol. Why am I disobeying my mom at 3 a.m. and I'm not home yet? Why did I cut school? I need education." I was so caught up in a negative life that I kept doing it because I did not want to let my friends down. I thought they would look at me like I'm a punk or I'm not down and I was afraid of what might happen to me if I no longer had them. Before I hung around negative people I was a good kid who had never been on probation, never got locked up, never stole, never robbed, never did anything wrong that involved the law. I was a good kid who loved basketball and had goals for my life. I wanted to be somebody when I grew up. As I got involved in negative things, everything I wanted in life no longer mattered. All I did all day and everyday was smoke, drink, rob and disobey my mom and the law.

After I started becoming part of the negativity I thought differently. I thought I don't need school to be rich. I could sell drugs and become a millionaire. I thought I didn't need a job because I could rob and get money whenever I needed it. I no longer thought positive. Everything I wanted in life I thought I still could get but in a negative way. Then after I got locked up for about 4 months or so, I realized how bad I was messing up my life and it hurt me because I did so many bad things for no apparent reason. While I was locked up, I wished over and over that I never met my so-called friends and that I never robbed or stole. I wished I could have gone to school and most of all I wished I just would have listened to my mom because everything she said was right. I'm hardheaded so no one could tell me anything. I have to let it happen to me and see the consequences on my own.

**Now I see because I'm locked up and away from my family and life right now. Now I know to listen to my mom and to go to school and who not to hang around. If my friends were truly my friends they would be here for me right now. I've learned a valuable lesson throughout my lifetime and when I do go home I will accomplish my goals in a positive way. I will live life to the fullest with no worries. I once was lost but now I am found.**

**Warren RCH**

**LOST**

*By: Michael*

**Talking to people could be very difficult. As a young boy I always stayed to myself. I never really interacted with anybody my age. Kids my age couldn't really help me with anything because they probably needed the same help. Everything that was going on in my life I just kept inside. I had to learn the hard way that holding things in can hurt me.**

**I chose not to express my feelings because I never knew when to do it, how to do it, or where to do it. Other people just don't like the feedback that they might get. A lot of people are afraid of what people might say or think. I learned that if I didn't speak up, then people would never know how I really felt.**

**Not expressing feelings is the worst thing a person could do. By holding everything in, I felt lost. When it came time for me to talk, I didn't know how to open up. I had to lie about feeling a certain way. Then I felt worse because lying only made me hurt more. When I lied to other people, I lost their trust and respect. They never could look at me as the same person. The bad thing was that my friendships were fading due to the lack of trust. Lying hurts the liar in other ways too. When everything falls down, the truth always comes out. When it's time for someone that cares to listen, it is hard for them to believe the person who usually lies. Sometimes the person that lies has a hard time telling the difference between reality and the lies.**

**Sharing problems helps people out in the long run. After I couldn't take it anymore, I started to talk and express my thoughts. It really worked out for the best because now I don't have to bottle up my feelings anymore. Now I feel more relaxed**

**and comfortable with my feelings. Now when I have a problem or when I'm feeling down, I can go to somebody and talk.**

**Talking to my friends changed my friendships. Now my friends and I have better conversations and talk more often. When my best friends and I used to go out together, we always talked about other people. Now we talk about ourselves and how we are doing. Talking to them helped us become better friends and helped us to get to know each other better. Now I feel better and more confident about myself. I know how to express my feelings.**

**Talking is a major part of communicating. If one doesn't talk, then people will not know how one really feels. People must get in touch with their emotions because if they don't, they'll be lost with their feelings like I was.**

**Warren RCH**

**LOST**

***By: Rashid***

**In general, my life so far has been pretty average. Sometimes everyone has to deal with some type of loss. Just like everyone else, I have lost something too. The biggest loss I ever had was when my dad left me and my brother alone with our mom.**

**When I lost my dad, it was a big loss because he was there for us all the time and he just left. He was always there when I needed something. I felt like I just had a mom and no father to talk to when it came to man to man conversation. I just pray to Allah everyday that he comes back so we can be a family.**

**He made me and my brother very happy. He said that he would always be there. He took us places, loved us and said he would never let anything happen to us. It changed me and my brother's life because now we have no father to talk to. I feel like I have no life and it hurt when he left.**

**I am missing him very much because we cannot do anymore father and son activities. He used to take us to basketball games all the time. When we went fishing, we talked about what we did wrong and that made me feel like our relationship was tight. I felt like a piece of me was gone when he left. He was the other half of my heart.**

**It is not easy to lose someone you love. All losses are painful for people that love someone or something. My dad used to take me fishing and that was a big part of my life. Now my mom takes me fishing and she is my dad until he comes back. Losing my dad was hard, but I am starting to move on again.**

## **Warren RCH**

### ***LOST***

***By: Trevor***

**Everybody loses something sometime in their lives. Losing someone or something can be shocking and really hard to deal with. I've lost a lot of important people in my life, my grandmother, my aunt, my grandfather and many friends. None of that is as painful as losing time with my mom. My mom is still alive, but I am separated from her for the next few months. When I am away from my mother, I feel lost.**

**I miss the way my mother always took care of me. My mother always made sure she spent lots of time with me. She made me feel like I always had someone to talk to about my problems. That made me feel good about my mom and myself. I really miss just sitting in the house and talking to her for hours.**

**My mom and I always have a great time and I miss when I'm away from her. My mom and I were always laughing and joking around. We even had inside jokes. That really helped us to feel close to each other. Sometimes I sit and think about all the fun we had and that helps me deal with tough times.**

**When I'm with my mom, I know I'll always be provided for. My mom always made sure I had clothes on my back. We always had a roof over our head. This made me feel safe and cared for. Now that I can't be with my mom, I realize how important all that she did for me really was.**

**I learned how to get over losing a lot of people in my life. Losing time with my mom, though, is something I cannot get over. I see her once in a while, but it is not the**

**same. When I go home, I will try to make up for all the time I missed with my mother.**